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BLM to Implement Dry Season Closure for Clear Creek Management Area

To protect public health and safety, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced today it will implement a dry season closure beginning June 4, 2005, affecting 30,000 acres of public lands within the Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA) in southern San Benito County and western Fresno County to public use. The temporary closure, through Oct. 15 when rainfall begins, is in response to concerns and data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) about exposure to naturally occurring asbestos.

BLM Hollister Field Manager Bob Beehler said the temporary closure will affect about half of the 75,000-acre CCMA, within the Serpentine Area of Critical Environmental Concern, an identified hazardous asbestos area. He said the closure will apply to all public land users, both vehicular and non-vehicular, but exemptions would be granted for those with valid access rights, such as emergency personnel, private property inholders, and others. The closure does not affect county-administered roads.

Beehler said BLM will post signs and provide public information materials at kiosks and other visitor locations to inform the public of the closure and its enforcement provisions, as well as the potential health risks related to asbestos exposure during the dry season, as identified by EPA in its February 2005 "Human Health Risk Assessment Technical Memorandum." The assessment is available from EPA in San Francisco and BLM in Hollister. Beehler said the EPA is conducting a further health risk assessment, slated to be done sometime next year that could affect future management of the area.

The closure, being implemented under BLM's regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations 8364.1 relating to protection of persons, property and resources), is part of the overall route designation planning effort underway for the CCMA, a popular recreation area for off-highway vehicle enthusiasts that also contains several unique and federally listed plant species. BLM published a draft plan amendment in July 2004 and intends to publish the proposed plan and final environmental impact statement (EIS) later this summer.

The public is invited to call the Clear Creek Hotline at (831) 630-5060 for up-to-the-hour information updates or the Hollister Field Office at (831) 630-5000.

[Closure Order](#)

[Area Map](#)